Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended)   A method for verifying a digital postage mark, the method comprising the steps of:

scanning a mail item with an optical scanning device to obtain a digital image of the mail item, the mail item including a digital postage mark and a destination address block;

parsing, with a processor, the digital image to obtain a digital postage mark area and a destination address block area;

~~extracting a first portion of the destination address block from the destination address block area;~~

generating, with the processor, a first address block image digest using the ~~first portion of~~ digital image of the destination address block area;

retrieving a second address block image digest from the digital postage mark area;

comparing, with the processor, the first address block image digest to the second address block image digest; and

accepting the mail item when the comparison of the first address block image digest to the second address block image digest is within a predetermined threshold.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 comprising the further step of:

> rejecting the mail item when the comparison of the first address block image digest to the second address block image digest is beyond a predetermined threshold.

3. (Original)   The method of claim 1 wherein the second address block image digest is in a cryptographic validation code in the digital postage mark area.

4. (Original) A method for generating a mail item, the method comprising the steps of:

> generating an address block image digest using a first portion of a destination address block of the mail item;

> using the address block image digest as a recoverable portion of a cryptographic validation code;

> formatting the recoverable portion of a cryptographic validation code with other postal data for digital postage mark information computation; and

> printing the digital postage mark information on one of the mail item, label or tag;

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended)   A method for verifying a digital postage mark, the method comprising the steps of:The method of claim 5, comprising the further steps of:

> scanning the mailpiece with an optical scanner device to obtain a digital image of the mailpiece, the mailpiece including the digital postage mark and a destination address block;

retrieving, with a processor, a representative portion of a destination address block image in its original form from the digital signature;

comparing, with the processor, the representative portion of the destination address block image with ~~the second~~ digital image data obtained from the scanned destination address block;

accepting the mailpiece when the comparison of the representative portion of the destination address block image with the ~~second~~ digital image data is within a predetermined threshold.

7. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 6 comprising the further step of:

rejecting the mailpiece when the comparison of the representative portion of the destination address block image with the ~~second~~ digital image data is beyond a predetermined threshold.